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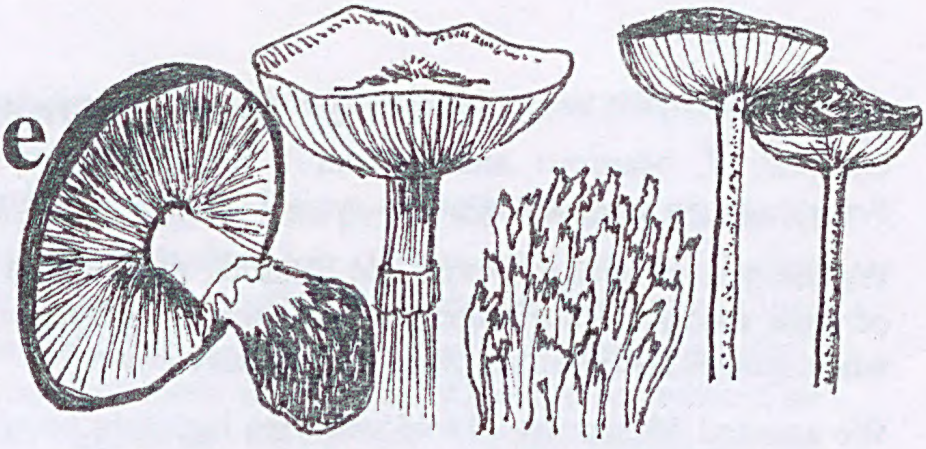

Assorted Fungi

Vale Alan (Curly) Hartup

Alan was well known to many, as a photographer, birdwatcher, cyclist, long time member of the Maryborough Field Naturalist Club, speaker at our meetings and friend - he will be greatly missed by all who knew this cheerful, friendly man.

Vale Maree Murrell

Maree was a valued member of our club for several years and will be sadly missed by those among us who knew her, especially those who had the privilege of "dancing" with her.

Antechinus

Nearly every day now we see Yellow-footed Antechinus running around the verandah beams of our house and, of course, we really enjoy watching them!
What worries me is that other less informed people in a similar situation might think they are mice or rats, and engage in pest extermination! Surely they must be frequent visitors to the houses of many others in the area.
I was wondering if it might be a good idea to write an article on these animals and especially how to distinguish them from introduced rodents and to protect them from cats and dogs, etc.

Alison Rowe

Editors Note: This is a real concern, and having caught an antechinus in a mouse trap, it is not an experience I want to repeat. There are a number of ways to distinguish between an antechinus and a common house mouse. An Antechinus has a longer pointed nose, a full jaw of teeth, larger scats that are composed almost entirely of insect remains and are easily crumbled, and it does not have the same musky smell as a mouse. Rats are much larger. (Triggs, B. 1996, *Tracks, Scats, and Other Traces*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.
There is further information in an article on Antechinus by John Turnbull in Castlemaine Naturalist #287, April 2002.

"Swifties" at Fryerstown...

On May 7, Maureen and I spent a pleasant afternoon birding in and around Fryerstown on a regular return to our old "stamping grounds".

We discovered, to our surprise and pleasure, prolific bird life with very good numbers of most species. This contrasted with our last excursion some three months earlier, when species and numbers were considerably down.

We counted 58 species all told, with the highlight being 6 Swift Parrots foraging in the mature Grey Box near the gates at the Fryerstown Cemetery. They were completely unperturbed by our presence, even when we stood directly under them. After approximately 10 minutes they flew off in a southerly direction, leaving us thrilled to have been able to observe these splendid birds for such a lengthy period.

Other highlights of the afternoon included three separate sightings each of male Golden Whistlers and White-eared Honeyeaters (which seem to have been very scarce lately). We also had good sightings of Crested Shrike-tits, Jacky Winters, Southern Whitefaces and Pardalotes. There were good numbers of a variety of honeyeaters and, to make the list complete, Eastern Yellow, Scarlet and Flame Robins.

Ken and Maureen Dredge

... and at the Golf Course

Since her initial sighting early in May, Debbie Worland has been recording regular visits by Swift Parrots to the Castlemaine Golf Course (one morning there were 60+ birds) and inviting others to share the privilege with her. The morning I went out with Debbie, it was very frosty and cold but eventually the Swift Parrots arrived and we had a wonderful view of these beautiful green birds feeding high up in the treetops with the sun catching the blue on their wings.

On the morning of the May meeting (14/5/04) Debbie reported 20 Swift Parrots at her back door! Across the road from the Golf Course, they were feeding on Ironbark nectar and lerps. There were Black-chinned Honeyeaters as well.

Swift Parrot Survey, May 15 and 16.

The Castlemaine Field Nats have been taking part in the twice yearly surveys held in autumn and late winter for several years now. This year was organised a little differently, leaving groups to choose from suggested sites (or any others they knew that might be worth visiting) and go out in their own time.

The Swift Parrot breeds during the summer months in Tasmania, returning to the mainland during April (Ken Dredge says the traditional time of arrival is Anzac day!) and braving Bass Strait again on their return to Tasmania in September. Birds have occasionally been seen in Victoria as early as the end of February. They are listed as endangered as there are only about 1000 breeding pairs left in the wild and their preferred habitat is disappearing rapidly. Another reason for their decline is their very

swift flight - they don't usually survive if they collide with buildings or telephone and electricity cables.

Most people went out on Saturday morning to do their part of the survey, but those on the walk at Eureka kept an eye out for them there too. Others went out on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, but the only ones to report any for the weekend were those who joined Debbie Worland at the Golf Club, before 8am on Saturday morning. Soon after we reached the area where they have been seen regularly Debbie commented on the peep-peep call that they seem to make at that time of day. We saw several circling and a few feeding, but not many were settling. Debbie kept assuring us that they really start to settle into feeding at 8.30am - and at 8.30am we began to see more and more birds, wheeling in the morning sun and coming in to feed on the blossom - with the sun on many of them they were a memorable sight. All in all we estimated that we had seen about 60 birds.

We went on up to an Ironbark which was in flower in Erin Court, before we left the area, and found another 3 feeding there among a throng of pardalotes and other honeyeaters.

It was a magic morning for me and as I settled on a seat, near one of the tees at the north end of the course, to eat my breakfast, I saw another Swifty, which rounded my morning's bird watching off nicely.

Rita Mills.

A Swift Parrot Search and Outing with the Woodend B.O.C.A.

On Saturday morning the 15th May, Maureen and I headed off in search of the very elusive Swift Parrot as part of a co-ordinated weekend search of the eastern states by the Threatened Species Network and other groups interested in the whereabouts and activities of this magnificent Tasmanian bred bird.

The day started off at 7.15am with a search of the Wesley Hill and Pennyweight Flat area - no luck here. Then a group of eight of us met at the Castlemaine Golf Club to view Debbie's "private collection" of Swifties. They arrived on cue! (see Rita's report above)

From there Maureen and I headed for the Red White and Blue Mine via Muckleford School Road. There was very little in the way of blossom or birds, and definitely no Swifties. We covered the Sandy Creek area - also without luck.

At approximately 10.30 am (allowing for bird's being a little bit late occasionally) we met with the Woodend Bird Observers Group at the Gower School. This group of about 15 enthusiasts included several members of our Field Nats Club: Bruce and Mandy, Bill and Robyn, Ken and Marjorie and Albert. We took a leisurely stroll of the area, in beautiful weather conditions, but the bird life didn't provide many highlights. No Swift Parrots but we did spot a family of White-browed Babblers and a Crested Shrike-tit. The Honeyeaters were quite well represented with Black-

chinned, White-naped, Brown-headed, Yellow-faced, Yellow-tufted and Fuscous all being present, though in smaller numbers.

From there we went to the Quince Tree for a walk before lunch. The bird life here was very scarce, and the best we could come up with was a Willy Wagtail and a family of White-winged Choughs.

It was, however, a very pleasant morning's birding and our information for the Threatened Species Network may well be of use, as we definitely know where the Swifties weren't!

Ken and Maureen Dredge

Enough Blackbirds for Two Pies!

Members at the May meeting were surprised and bemused when Albert Golden emptied the contents of a large bag onto the floor – not four and twenty but forty-two individually packed frozen Blackbirds were revealed! Albert had been busy trapping them in a wire trap between November and February. He baits his trap with blueberries - a clump hanging in the cage and some scattered at the entrance. With this method he only ever catches Blackbirds and if anything else such as a native rat or an antechinus were caught he could release it unharmed.

Tawny Frogmouth Encounter

23/5/04 During the evening in the Grampians recently, a large Tawny Frogmouth kept flying down to the window to catch moths for his dinner – each time we heard the tap on the window and as we looked, saw him flying off. Later we sat waiting for him to return and had several wonderful views of him as he landed and pecked another moth from low on the window. Still later in the evening, Jarrod switched the outside light on and there he was just feet away in a tree! We wondered if it might have been the same bird who was raised at the house (a wildlife refuge) several years ago, and where it's home was the dark space above the refrigerator?

Geraldine Harris

Watch out for these natural events during June

According to Alan Reid in the Gould League book *Banksias and Bilbies*, June is the month to start looking for:

Fungi (Coral, Rooting Shanks, Earth Star Fungi, Ink Caps, Boletus and Fly Agarics),
Winter orchids (Dwarf/ Trim/ Nodding / Tall Greenhoods and Helmet Orchids),
Early flowering wattles (Cootamundra, Spreading),
Native plants in flower (Early Nancy, Cranberry Heath, Yellow Stars, Common Heath, Purple Coral-pea, Billy Buttons and Box Mistletoe),
Ponds creatures (Dragonfly and Damselfly nymphs),
Birds (Yellow-rumped Thornbills building domed nests, Crested Shrike-tits tearing bark off gums, Lapwings laying eggs in ground nests, Mistletoebirds),
Echidnas searching in lines for mates, and foggy mornings. What else can you find?

The Tess Kloot Collection (letter received 22/4/04)

We have received a letter from Tess Kloot informing us that her extensive collection is now housed at the State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanson Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000. The collection consists of ornithological and biographical files (567), newspaper cuttings (164), an album containing photographs of people who have contributed to Australia's natural history (ca.145) and considerable biographical and pictorial material on Tom Iredale, and his wife Lillian Medland.

Anyone seeking information covered by this collection is advised to contact the State Library. The reference number for the Tess Kloot Collection is PA 03/107.
Information used for publication must appear with acknowledgment.

Editor's Note: Tess Kloot was librarian and archivist at the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union for many years and long term volunteer at the National Museum of Victoria Bird Room. She published numerous articles in a series 'The Biography behind the Bird' and wrote two books on garden birds with Ellen McCulloch.

Pests Plant and Animal Management News

(From "Under Control" Feb 2004)

- **Dock Moth** now established in Central Victoria. This moth with distinctive orange, black and white stripes across the abdomen is used to control weeds of the Rumex genus. The larvae attack dock plants by boring into the roots. It appears to be spreading from the release site near Maryborough.
- A **$500,000 program to eradicate willows from the Snowy River**. Willows take over stream banks, smother native vegetation, adversely affect stream ecology, and may in some cases increase the risk of flooding and bank erosion. The two main culprits are Basket Willow and Golden Willow. Crews will be airlifted into remote areas, and will poison trees individually to avoid damage to native species.
- Elm Leaf Beetles collected from Santa Margarita in California. These beetles have been collected from an area where the **Elm Leaf Beetle Parasitic Fly** has been established. The parasitic flies have been hatched from the beetles in quarantine laboratories in Frankston and released at several sites in Victoria
- **"Sleeper" weeds** to receive attention. Surveys are being done in Australia to determine the present distribution of 10 weeds which are at present limited in distribution but which have the potential to become major pests in the future. Four of these occur in Victoria. They are the Taurian Thistle, a groundsel bush known as Chilquilla, Water Dropwort, and Lobed Needlegrass. A fifth suspect was accidentally eradicated when it was covered by landfill.
- **Horehound attacked in Wyperfeld N.P**. Two species, the Horehound Clearwing Moth which has root boring larvae, and the Plume Moth which has larvae that feed on leaves and growing tips have been introduced with the result that the horehound population has been drastically reduced.

George Broadway

Observations

Scarlet Robins. Noellene Mills reports Scarlet Robins at her home on McKenzies Hill early in May, which seems earlier than usual. The robins have been around again for the last two years after a period of three or four years when she seldom saw them.

Black ants attack grounded termites. A relative, living in Goornong, told of an incident after a hailstorm in April where flying termites had been knocked to the ground, after losing their wings, and were being attacked by hundreds of little black ants. Rita Mills

Gang-gangs. On the U3A walk at Daylesford near Twin Bridges, Gang-gangs were seen feeding at the side of the track - four females (one juvenile), three males (one juvenile). They were not very fussed by our presence, and went on feeding on the Hawthorn berries and Blackwood seeds while we stood and watched from about three or four metres away. Rita Mills

Mistletoebirds. Natalie de Maccus wondered, after positively identifying her first Mistletoebirds, if she may have mistaken them for robins in the past.

George Broadway has also sighted a Mistletoebird this month.

Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. Chris Morris has seen Yellow-faced Honeyeaters feeding on mistletoe.

Pigmy Possum. Rita Mills brought along a photo, taken by her sister at Pomonal, of a Pigmy Possum peeping out of their sugar basin!

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. Thirty or more Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos were in the Radiata Pines adjacent to the Chewton Cemetery. Hans van Gemert

More than forty Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos were flying east at the end of Saint Street, Castlemaine. George Broadway

Tasmanian Devil. Helen Morris had a good clear view of a Tasmanian Devil as it scuttled off the side of the road the on way to Port Arthur.

Wood Ducks and Indian Miners. Liz Freeman reported sighting seventy Wood Ducks on a dam in Tomkies Road. Liz also reported the presence of Indian Miners in her garden. She discourages them with pomegranate attacks and by placing her parrot nesting boxes low down in the trees where they are less likely to be taken over by the miners.

Sugar Glider. Natasha Harris' dog, Birri, is useful for finding small animals in trees. He follows their trails and then stands looking up into the tree. His most recent find was a Sugar Glider in a tree in the back yard at Barkers Creek.

Cicada Nymph Pupae Cases. 20-30 pupae cases counted clinging to large tree trunk in bush paddock at Barkers Creek. Geraldine Harris

A conference of Ravens in Colles Rd. Moonlight Flat. "Conference" is the collective term used for a number of Ravens. Chris Morris

Plants in the Botanic Gardens. Athol Dorman reported that a good number of the grasses Field Nats planted in the Botanical Gardens are showing a touch of green and look like they will survive.

Fox encounter. Jenny Dwyer, walking late in the evening, was followed from the Baptist church in Templeton St. to near Sympatico's in Johnstone St. by a fox – not

discouraged by stones, or whether she ran or stopped, it followed along and at times was just two metres behind her!
Jacky Winters are back along the Railway line near Sawmill Road – it is about five years since they were lasted sighted there. Rita Mills

From the Business Meeting 27/5/04

Welcome to new member: Karen Mather.

Friends of Box Ironbark representative, Frank Panter, attended the meeting to express concern regarding:-
(a) possible Council reclassification of land to make way for subdivision of bushland into one acre house blocks. FoBIB are concerned that this will lead to **forest being cleared** to make way for houses when cleared areas exist that are more suited to such development.
(b) the need for **buffer zones between housing and the National Heritage Park** and a proposal to reclassify land adjacent to the National Heritage Park at Happy Valley/Moonlight Flat to allow denser development. FoBIB are seeking support from groups such as Landcare and Field Nats. for a joint deputation to meet with Council to discuss the need for such buffer zones. A meeting has been arranged for 8.30am on June 8 (see Castlemaine Mail article 28/5/04)

Roadside Conservation.
Tue. Jun. 8. Yapeen Muckleford Rd, Guildford. Meet at site at 10am. Help is required "staking out" areas of endangered plants along roadside in preparation for weed control works. Jenni will provide morning tea, BYO Thermos/ drink, gloves, wear sturdy boots and warm jacket.

Extra Events for your Calendar

Aug/Sept. 2004. Club Visit to Chiltern National Park in Spring.
The club visit to Chiltern National Park will go ahead on, **Mon. Aug. 30 – Thu. Sep. 2, 2004**. Special rates at the Chiltern Motel are still to be confirmed. The standard special bird-watching price is two nights accommodation, with two continental breakfasts and one dinner for $110 per person twin share. Mid week prices are reduced further. Accommodation at the Caravan Park is also available.

Ern Perkins.

Articles Welcome - Articles, reports and observations can be left at Tonks Bros in Barkers St. or sent to Geraldine Harris, P.O.Box 184, Castlemaine, 3450,
Ph. 54742244, gedharris @castlemaine.net
Articles need to be submitted by the 4th Thursday of the month.
Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Club.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme - June, 2004.

General meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm on the second Friday of each month, except January.

Excursions are usually on the Saturday following the general meeting, and leave promptly at the times stated from The Octopus, opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings are held at 27 Doveton Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS.

Friday Jun. 11. ***The Importance of Environmental Flows in Rivers, Streams and Wetlands.*** Dr.Paul Sinclair of Environment Victoria.

Sat. Jun. 12. ***Melville Caves.*** Leader: Chris Morris, Phone Ph.9885 4221. Leave from the Octopus at 10am sharp. Bring Lunch.

Tue. Jun. 8. Roadside Conservation – Yapeen Muckleford Rd., Guildford. Meet at site at 10am Take thermos/ drink, gloves, sturdy boots and warm jacket. Morning tea will be provided.

Fri. Jul. 9. ***Kimberleys.*** Chris Morris. UCA Hall, 8pm.

Sat. Jul. 10. ***Native Street Trees.*** Leader: Ern Perkins, Ph 54723124. **Launch of the *Native Street Trees* leaflet. Driving, then walking. Leave the Octopus at 1.30 sharp.

Sat. Jul. 24. Roadside Cleanup. Meet near Tait's Carriages, Pyrenees Highway, Castlemaine at 8.30am. Gloves, garbage bags and red safety vests supplied. Wear sturdy footwear.

Sat. Jul. 31, Sun. Aug. 1. ***National Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Survey.***

Fri. Aug. 13. ***Local Geology.*** Clive Willman.

Sat. Aug. 14. ***Jackass Flat Reserve – White Hills.***

Thu. Aug. 26. ***Broom Pull.*** Meet at the Mary St/Froomes Rd. corner at 9am. Wear sturdy footwear, gloves, hat etc. Bring drinks and morning tea.

Fri. Sep. 10. ***Conserving Forest Wildlife.*** Richard Loyn, Arthur Rylah Institute.

Sat. Sep. 11. ***Mandurang – Greater Bendigo National Park.***

2004 Committee - Chris Morris (President) Ph. 9885 4221; Rita Mills (Vice President and Public Officer) Ph. 54724553; George Broadway (Secretary) Ph. 5472 2513; Hans van Gemert (Treasurer) Ph. 5472 1082; Geraldine Harris (Newsletter Ed.) Ph. 5474 2244; Ern Perkins Ph. 5472 3124; Richard Piesse; Athol Dorman and Nigel Harland.

Subscriptions for 2004

Ordinary membership: Single $22, Family $30

Pensioner or student: Single $19, Family $24

The subscription includes postage of the *Castlemaine Naturalist.*

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc., PO Box324, Castlemaine.

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